

Book Review

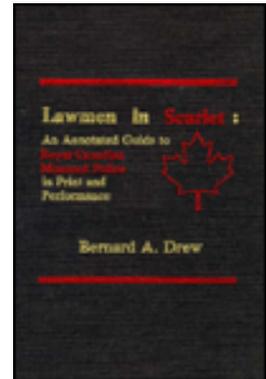
***Lawmen in Scarlet:
An Annotated Guide to Royal Canadian Mounted Police
in Print and Performance***

by Bernard Alger Drew

Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, New Jersey

1990, 276 pages, illustrations, index

ISBN 0-8108-2330-6



Reviewed by Dr Hank Prunckun

The Canadian Mountie is not only a national symbol, but a Canadian folk hero. The Mountie is also something of a folk hero to the rest of the world, with Australia being no exception. So, while exploring a second-hand book shop recently, I came across a well-preserved hardbound copy of Bernard Drew's 1990 *Lawmen in Scarlet*. Although published some twenty-three years ago, this vintage text is an important historical reference work about the fictional treatments of the popularity of this fascinating character in policing history.

Although there is a plethora of works which address scholarly histories of the role of the Mounties, until the release of Drew's *Lawmen in Scarlet* there was little attention directed toward an analysis of this legendary figure in either fictional print or drama. In this regard, *Lawmen in Scarlet* could have been seen as a long awaited addition to Mountie literature, especially for those who wanted to probe the legends surrounding this champion figure. I know of no other treatment of this topic that has been published since, so Drew's book lays bare some of the distortions and myths that have come to encapsulate this force and are, hence, worth preserving.

At the time it was written, Drew was the managing editor of a regional Massachusetts newspaper and a part time historian. His scholarship resulted in him compiling a valuable guide to some five-hundred works of fiction and an excess of two-hundred motion picture titles. The text is divided into two parts; the first addresses prose and poetry and the second drama. The compiler also includes a brief history of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and a preliminary section which contains selected references works. Both parts are further subdivided

into sections which survey specific subjects. For example, the first part on prose and poetry contains works on Book Fiction, Magazine Fiction, Pulp Magazines, Comic Strips, Big Little Books, and Prose Selected Reference Works. The second part covers Motion Pictures, Television, Radio, Musical and Dramatic Theater, Opera, Drama, Selected Reference Works, and finally, a Major Actor Index.

Lawmen in Scarlet contains comprehensive author and title indexes, as well as the main performer index just mentioned. This latter index cites heroes and heroines, selected villains, sidekicks and animal companions from the musical, dramatic and operatic lists—a unique feature. There are also numerous photographs, drawings and cartoons depicting the lore of the Mountie interspersed throughout. Many of these have been selected from the dust-jackets of the books cited in the bibliography.

From first inspection, it is obvious, that an immense amount of research was devoted to writing *Lawmen in Scarlet*. Drew's bibliographical annotations are clear and concise, providing the user with succinct abstracts of the works under review. Drew also presents some interesting biographical information about the various authors; for instance, Ian Anderson from South Australia. According to Drew, Anderson was ". . . determined to become a Canadian Mountie at the age of six, and at seven wanted to be a writer. After serving briefly with the South Australian Mounted Police, he became a member of the RCMP, his first posting at Lethbridge, Fort MacLeod, Coutts, and Medicine Hat. He later served as a sub-inspector in the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, and worked as a private investigator in Melbourne." I found some of the background summaries of the various authors as fascinating as the subject material they wrote about.

The book is nicely presented in its hardbound library binding. It was printed on alkaline paper, thus assuring that it will remain a reference work for all times. Overall, *Lawmen in Scarlet* is a well-researched book worthy of a spot on the desk of anyone interested in the history of the RCMP, or for that matter, in police history generally. Check the book's availability on the popular e-book websites that sell second-hand books; it will make a nice addition to your professional library.

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